



CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

INCREASED EFFORT ON DISEASE MANAGEMENT

BACKGROUND: Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal brain disease of cervids caused by an abnormal protein called a prion. In South Dakota, CWD was discovered in seven captive elk facilities during the winter of 1997-98 and in wild populations in 2001 when a positive white-tailed deer in Fall River County was detected during the hunting season. Over the past two decades, samples have been submitted from hunter harvest, sick surveillance and other mortalities in an effort to monitor this disease. As a result, 13,590 white-tailed deer (125 positives) have been tested, along with 6,122 mule deer (81 positives), and 7,352 elk (194 positives) from across the state, including Wind Cave National Park and Custer State Park.

WHY THE CURRENT INCREASE IN EFFORTS TO MANAGE THIS DISEASE?

New research findings suggest a negative impact to population growth rates of deer and elk in neighboring western states. Updated prevalence rates of elk, primarily in Wind Cave National Park and Custer State Park, are concerning for the future sustainability of these local populations. Even though the Department has not intensively monitored CWD prevalence, it appears CWD is slowly spreading within the Black Hills and on the western prairie. CWD has not been confirmed outside of Custer, Fall River, Lawrence and Pennington counties, though past surveillance efforts were not designed to determine presence/absence across the state.

LOOKING AHEAD

One of the Department's strategic plan priorities for 2019 is to *enhance the Department's efforts to manage Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk across the state and launch a strategic communications plan to educate and inform public about the safety, risks and any new regulations.*

An internal workgroup was created to lead and discuss CWD-related topics and is made up of staff from the big game program, communications, law enforcement, Custer State Park, administration as well as Commission representation. As part of the public involvement process, a stakeholder group has also been developed to provide input on the development of a draft action plan which will then be available for internal and public comment. In addition, seven public open houses will be conducted across the state in March 2019.

GOAL STATEMENT

To determine presence/absence of CWD, reduce the spread and/or prevalence of CWD, and to have an informed public that understands, supports, and participates with CWD management practices to ensure viable deer and elk populations for future generations.

KEY MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES		
1	Public education and involvement	Launch a CWD strategic communications plan to educate and inform target audiences and key partners about the safety, risks, how they can help reduce the spread of CWD, and any new regulations.
2	Limit spread of CWD from known locations	Interstate and intrastate transportation, feeding of wildlife, captive cervids, carcass disposal, and other best management practices.
3	Determine presence/absence of CWD statewide	Identify sampling areas and sample size needs, and how to most efficiently obtain samples.
4	Determine need of CWD prevalence rates and evaluate thresholds for management activities	Identify sampling areas and sample size needs, how to obtain samples, and evaluate thresholds for implementation of management actions if deemed necessary.

A CWD action plan and any recommended changes to administrative rule to meet the above described objectives will be presented to the Commission in July 2019. Any new regulations would not go into effect until the 2020 deer and elk hunting seasons with best management practices encouraged during the 2019 hunting seasons. This will ensure that any regulation changes will be included in the 2020 hunting applications and allow the Department sufficient time to launch a strategic communications plan.

QUESTIONS

Chad Switzer | 605.773.4193 or chad.switzer@state.sd.us

Additional information can be found online at <https://gfp.sd.gov/chronic-wasting-disease/>.